

## **2006 Annual Solid Waste Report – Executive Summary**

The Georgia Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Act of 1990 requires the Department of Community Affairs (DCA), with the cooperation of the Department of Natural Resources' Environmental Protection Division (EPD) and the Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority (GEFA), to report annually on the state of solid waste management in Georgia. Per the Act, the FY 2006 report, covering the period of July 1, 2005-June 30, 2006, contains information on:

- the status of local and regional solid waste management planning in Georgia;
- the number and types of solid waste handling facilities in the state;
- the remaining capacity of each permitted solid waste handling facility;
- the number and types of solid waste grants and loans made to local governments;
- a compilation and analysis of solid waste management data provided by cities and counties through their completed Solid Waste Survey;
- a statement of progress achieved in meeting the 25% waste reduction goal established in subsection (c) of Code Section 12-8-21<sup>1</sup>;
- a statement of progress achieved in solid waste management education;
- any revisions in the state solid waste management plan deemed necessary; and
- recommendations for improving the management of solid waste in Georgia.

Further, the Act requires DCA to report on the status of litter prevention and abatement in the state. The litter report shall include but not be limited to:

- An itemization of expenditures made from the Solid Waste Trust Fund for the prevention and abatement of litter;
- A compilation and analysis of litter prevention, collection, and enforcement efforts;
- An assessment of littering in the state;
- A statement of progress in achieving a litter prevention ethic; and
- Recommendations for improving litter abatement and prevention efforts.

This litter report is available online at [www.dca.ga.gov](http://www.dca.ga.gov), under Office of Environmental Management programs.

The Solid Waste Management Act requires all local governments to have, or be included in, a solid waste management plan that demonstrates adequate waste disposal capacity and collection capability for a 10-year period. Thirty-six (36) cities and 11 counties did not have an approved plan by the end of FY 2006. Local governments that failed to adopt approved solid waste management plans are listed and continually updated online at: [www.GeorgiaPlanning.com](http://www.GeorgiaPlanning.com)

During FY 2006, 16.9 million tons of waste was sent to Georgia disposal facilities. Most of this waste entered lined, monitored landfills operating under federal Subtitle D. A small and dwindling percentage of the Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) entered unlined landfills that have been allowed to operate under their pre-Subtitle D permits. Construction and Demolition waste (C&D), a subset of MSW, is generally disposed in unlined landfills that are less expensive to operate.

The state continues to have an adequate supply of permitted disposal capacity with 25 years of remaining permitted Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) disposal capacity and 16 years of remaining permitted Construction and Demolition (C&D) disposal capacity. It is important that the state and local governments carefully monitor the remaining permitted disposal capacity throughout the state. In FY 2006 just over half of the permitted disposal capacity in the state was contained in just 7 of the 115 landfills. This concentration heightens the need to carefully monitor the financial assurances of these and all the disposal facilities in the state. It also emphasizes the need for

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<sup>1</sup> During the 2005 Legislative session the 25% per capita waste disposal reduction goal was reworded to state that every effort should be made to reduce the per capita disposal rate of waste sent to MSW landfills in Georgia.

local solid waste management planning and annual monitoring of the implementation of these plans. Both the Northeast Georgia RDC and the South Georgia RDC are the only two RDCs with less than 10 years of permitted disposal capacity. Demonstration of capacity and capacity assurance is highly dependent upon the permitting process and the time it takes for a solid waste handling permit to be issued. It is worth noting that the South Georgia RDC had over 20 years of disposal capacity in 2005 but fell below 10 years when a permit expired and the permitted space was not constructed. (See section A Disposal and Capacity and section B Per Capita Disposal for more details)

The level and type of solid waste, recycling, and yard trimmings collection services provided throughout the state varies greatly depending upon a community's size, density, and demographic profile. To track solid waste management trends, DCA administers an annual survey of all local governments in Georgia. The number of local governments whose residents have access to recycling services had been dwindling but rebounded sharply in FY 2005<sup>2</sup>. The increase is mostly due to better reporting, but the fact that the numbers are up slightly from 2003 may indicate a general expansion of local government recycling programs in response to citizen demand and increasing recycling commodity values.

During FY 2005, 25 cities and 25 counties reported actively promoting waste minimization practices such as home composting or beneficial reuse of yard trimmings. During FY 2005, 258 cities and 33 counties reported collecting yard trimmings for diversion from MSW landfills, however inert landfill disposal is reported as one of the leading "processing" methods for these materials. (See section C: Solid Waste & Recycling Collection of the report for more details)

Another growing trend that needs to be carefully monitored is the amount of waste imported to Georgia for disposal and its potential impact on future disposal capacity and Georgia's environment. With statewide MSW tipping fees at \$35.51 per ton (\$22.09 for C&D waste), far less than Northeastern states and Florida, Georgia landfills represent considerable cost-savings for companies moving large amounts of waste. Because the waste reduction goal specified in the Act includes all waste disposed in MSW landfills, this out-of-state waste is included in our progress toward meeting the waste reduction goal, and undercuts waste reduction and recycling efforts undertaken by Georgians. On a per capita basis, 7.52 pounds of waste entered MSW landfills daily during FY 2006, and nearly one pound/day of that came from outside Georgia's borders. (See section B: Per Capita Disposal and section D: MSW & C&D Landfill Tipping Fees of the report for more details)

Nearly \$500,000 from the Solid Waste Trust Fund was expended to support local government recycling and waste reduction grants in FY 2006. Almost \$200,000 went to provide scrap tire amnesty collections, and approximately \$275,000 was awarded by GEFA's Recycling and Waste Reduction grant program to support local recycling collection and processing capacity. (See section E: Grants and Loans to Local Governments)

In response to one of the needs identified in the 2005 Annual Solid Waste Report to improve the management of solid waste in the state, DCA commissioned a waste characterization study to provide a comprehensive view of the composition of what Georgians were throwing away. Data were compiled statewide and broken down regionally by Regional Development Centers (RDCs.) The report is available online at [www.dca.ga.gov](http://www.dca.ga.gov). The report quantifies how much of what types of material are landfilled in Georgia, and whether it comes from residential or commercial sources. Among the findings, the report highlighted that nearly 40% of what is buried in Georgia landfills consists of materials that are commonly included in local government recycling collection programs. This information will be useful to local governments and Georgia based industries that use recycled content materials in their manufacturing operations.

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<sup>2</sup> The considerable lag time in gathering, verifying, and analyzing this data results in the previous years' collection and yard trimmings management data being used to compile this report.

With the findings from the Waste Characterization Study in hand, DCA adopted an updated State Solid Waste Management Plan. The purpose of this state plan is to chart the course for the combined efforts of the state and local governments to manage Georgia's solid waste in an environmentally sound and cost-effective manner over the next ten years. The focus of the plan is on MSW, as it is defined in state law. As such, it includes household and commercial solid wastes, as well as yard trimmings and construction and demolition waste, but does not include solid waste from mining, agricultural, or silviculture operations or industrial processes or operations.

The format of the Plan is consistent with the Minimum Planning Standards required for local government solid waste planning efforts. The Plan follows an approach that begins with a description of the solid waste being disposed in the State. It then describes for each element of solid waste management (waste reduction, collection, disposal, land limitation, and education and public involvement) the following information:

- Inventory and Assessment: Summarizes the inventory of existing programs at the state and local levels, describing current practices and trends.
- Identification of Needs and Goals: Describes the various opportunities that are available to help address the statewide effort to reach its goals.
- Implementation Strategy: Describes the actions to be taken by the state government, including providing assistance to local governments.

These two tools, the waste characterization study and the state solid waste management plan, need to be used to develop a comprehensive strategy to reduce the amount of waste entering Georgia landfills.

The per capita disposal rate in the state continues to rise, mainly due to the continuing rise in out-of-state waste imports. The per capita disposal rate for MSW generated and disposed within the state remains relatively constant. It is hoped with the updated State Solid Waste Management Plan and Waste Characterization results, local governments will be better able to target their limited resources and increase the efficiency or expand of their recycling programs. A specific waste reduction goal and recycling strategy needs to be developed for the state. The continued use of inert landfills for yard trimmings and growth in the use of solid waste transfer stations needs to be monitored and addressed in local solid waste planning efforts. As the state identifies a strategy for reducing the MSW disposal rate, efforts to quantify and address C&D waste reduction and solid waste from mining, agricultural, or silviculture operations or industrial processes or operations needs to be completed.

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